



Safe Church Policy

For the Protection of Our

Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

St. Matthews Lutheran Church

Kitchener

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Reference Material (Church Office)

Forms:

- Volunteer Ministry Covenant of Care
- Volunteer Application
- Police Vulnerable Record Check
- Activity Program Waiver and Medical Release
- General Incident Report
- Guide to Interviewing a new volunteer
- Referencing and referencing process
- Sample form for logging (Appendix A)

Position Descriptions:

- Nursery Leader Job Description
- Pre-school program leader Job Description
- Sunday school program leader ages 6 – 12 Job description
- Youth program teacher for ages 12-18 Job Description
- Youth program leader for ages 12-18 Job Description
- Program leader for seniors' visitation Job Description
- Out of the Cold program volunteers Position Description



Introduction

St. Matthews (Kitchener) Lutheran Church has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth and children. In that context, the Church stresses the sanctity of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God. In addition to a spiritual commitment, the church has moral, legal and societal obligations to ensure a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in church programs and activities. Recognizing the human capacity for unacceptable behavior, we accept our responsibility to implement clear policies and procedures to minimize the risk of abuse to those who participate in church programs and events and to protect our staff and volunteers.

The abuse of a vulnerable person, whether the victim is a child or an adult, tears at the fabric of family and community life and has far-reaching consequences. A serious incident of abuse can undermine years of dedicated service by a Place of Worship, and can lead to declining participation, low morale, and a diminished sense of confidence within the community. In the end, it is not just the victims that suffer, but also the spiritual leaders, employees, and volunteers who have committed their lives to caring for them. This policy is based on and in line with the ELCIC (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada). For additional information, refer to ELCIC's document "Policy to Protect Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable People". Appendix C below provides additional information regarding the Ontario Government's requirements.

There will be no tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect by or of staff or volunteers at St. Matthews' events.

The goal of this policy is:

- a) Minimization of the risk of abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults. Prevention includes having adequate processes in place in order to prevent opportunities for abuse, neglect, and harm from arising.
- b) Protection of all the vulnerable in our midst. The protection of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.
- c) Reporting of all incidents of abuse, neglect and harm. Such incidents, wherever, and whenever they are encountered, will be reported immediately to the designated internal authority (Pastor or VP Vulnerable Person Protection Committee), the police, and the appropriate agencies in accordance with civil law requirements. The reporting will be influenced by an evaluation of the severity of the occurrence.
- d) The training and support for staff and volunteers. A process for screening, recruiting, training, supervising and supporting staff and volunteers.
- e) Protection of the organization, staff and volunteers from lawsuits involving allegations of abuse. Abuse can place the reputation of the organization in jeopardy, and the financial costs of defending lawsuits can be devastating.

Policy Administration

A permanent Vulnerable Person Protection Committee (VPPC) will be struck to ensure the functionality of and to administer this policy. The committee will consist of:

Permanent Members: Chair – Pastor, Vice Chair - Vice- President.

The Board President will be the ex-officio member of this committee should any other member be unable to perform their duties.

Non-Permanent Members: A representative from each ministry / program affected. For a large ministry or program, it is desirable to have two representatives. Other screened and trained volunteers.

List of Current Program / Ministries that fall under this policy:

- a) Sunday School.
- b) Youth.
- c) Vacation Bible School.
- d) Building Monitors.
- e) Nursery.
- f) Volunteer Drivers.
- g) Out of the Cold. (voluntary police check)
- h) Visitation.
- i) Children's' Choir.
- j) Loaves and Fishes. (voluntary police check)
- k) Board members. (voluntary police check)

Refer to Appendix A for an evaluation of risk factors.

Definitions

Vulnerable Persons

A vulnerable person is anyone of any age or gender who may easily be exploited by another. This would include children, youth and some adults. These people are at a disadvantage as they may be unable to fully protect themselves due to age, disability, or personal circumstances (e.g. emotional distress due to crisis or trauma).

They may have personal handicaps and could be:

- a) Cognitively challenged.
- b) Emotionally susceptible.
- c) Physically challenged.

Others may be socially isolated, and:

- a) Desperately in need; socially or materially.
- b) Lack the ability to communicate adequately because of speech or hearing difficulties.
- c) Have an inability to understand, speak and read the language in use.
- d) Living in fear, real or perceived.
- e) In fear or awe of certain roles or authority figures.

While not an exhaustive description, a vulnerable person is one who has difficulty protecting him or herself from harm either temporarily or permanently.

Abuse:

To use wrongly, to maltreat, to injure. It is the misuse of power by a person in a position of

trust. Abuse may take various forms:

Physical Abuse:

Deliberate physical force or action that could result in injury to another person. It can include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing. It is not a form of reasonable discipline at church events.

Emotional Abuse:

Any pattern of hurting one's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on someone beyond his or her capacity. It includes, but is not limited to, verbal attacks, insults, humiliation or rejection.

Spiritual Abuse:

Happens when a spiritual leader or system such as a church or school tries to control, manipulate, or dominate a person through physical, intellectual, or emotional means. When words, or actions, tear down or attack another person in the name of God, or when fear, or other emotional affect is created in order to control and dominate a person, thus compromising the ability of the individual to think and act for him or herself apart from the wishes of the spiritual leader or group - this is spiritual abuse. The church is to be a place that resonates with the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Where these traits are practiced by the spiritual leadership or group there will be little room for the coercion of spiritual abuse.

Sexual Abuse:

Occurs when someone is used for sexual stimulation or gratification without consent. It includes any sexual exploitation of a child, whether consensual or not, by an adult or older child. It also includes sexual exploitation of a non-consenting adult, or exploitation of someone without the mental capacity to provide informed consent.

Types of sexual abuse:

- a) Fondling.
- b) Oral, genital or anal penetration.
- c) Intercourse.
- d) Forcible rape.
- e) Improper touching (see below).
- f) Verbal comments.
- g) Pornographic videos.
- h) Obscene phone calls.
- i) Exhibitionism.
- j) Allowing children or youth to witness sexual activity.

Child neglect:

The failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. Young children should never be left unattended.

Harassment:

Repeated subtle or overt action, particularly by a person in a position of authority, which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated.

Improper touching:

Touching which can create feelings of violation, confusion or isolation. It may include kissing, coaxing someone to give a kiss, extended hugging or tickling or touching in any area that would be covered by a swim suit; unnecessarily carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.

Improper discipline:

Corporal or emotional forms of punishment are unacceptable. Improper discipline includes repetitive yelling or screaming at children, threatening them or physically hurting them. By contrast, proper discipline involves establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behavior and maintaining such behavioral expectations with firm and kind expressions of authority.

Assault:

To cause bodily harm by inappropriately applying force to another person; to attempt or threaten to apply force.

Prejudice:

A judgment made and attitude formed towards a certain group without prior knowledge of the facts, usually based on a stereotype, sometimes including an irrational attitude of hostility.

Discrimination:

Treating people differently through prejudice; unfair treatment of one person or group, usually because of prejudice about race, ethnic group, age group, religion, or gender.

Symptoms of abuse and molestation

Church volunteers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit.

Physical signs may include:

- a) Lacerations and bruises.
- b) Nightmares.
- c) Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area.
- d) Difficulty with urination.
- e) Discomfort when sitting.
- f) Torn or bloody underclothing.
- g) Venereal disease.

Behavioral signs may include:

- a) Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area.
- b) Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults.
- c) Sexual self-consciousness.
- d) "Acting out" sexual behavior.
- e) Withdrawal from church activities and friends.

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- a) I don't like (names a particular person).
- b) (Particular person) does things to me when we're alone.
- c) I don't like to be alone with (particular person).
- d) (Particular person) fooled around with me.

Methods / Guidelines

Methods for reducing risk:

- a) Follow a two-person policy whenever possible – during any program, have at least two adults present. Where possible, the two adults should be unrelated.
- b) Require two volunteers/staff to transport children, youth or vulnerable adults in an organization vehicle or in a volunteer's vehicle.
- c) Visit seniors with a partner.
- d) When the two-person policy cannot be used, notify a parent before a proposed

- one-to-one contact with a child / youth (e.g. in a mentoring relationship) and ask permission to meet.
- e) Where the two-person policy cannot be used, require that one-to-one contacts between a volunteer or staff and child, youth or vulnerable adult take place in a public area either inside or outside the organization's facilities, where both people can be seen by others.
- f) Add a window in the door of each classroom or activity room, or always leave the door open.
- g) Parent / caregiver contact information should be carefully maintained.
- h) No child should be dropped off without a leader present.
- i) No parents or adults should enter a classroom or activity room without permission.

Washroom Guidelines

Parents are to be encouraged to take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service. This recommendation is to be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new school year, and throughout the year to newcomers. Vulnerable adults may need special bathroom aids: assists bars, and so on. It may be necessary to ensure that cleanliness follows use.

Nursery

As a general rule, volunteers in the nursery will not be expected to change diapers.

However, in the event that this becomes necessary the following rules will apply:

- a) Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery volunteer or responsible adult can see the child being changed.
- b) Young volunteers must be of confirmation age or older, with appropriate training, before being permitted to change diapers. For nursery aged children, diaper changing is to be done only by designated adult personnel and must be conducted within the view of another leader or volunteer. If at all possible, diaper changing should be done by the child's parent or guardian.
- c) No adult or teen helper is ever to be in a closed washroom or cubicle with a child. If another adult is not available, the adult who accompanies the child should take a position in plain view at the open door of the washroom. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- d) In an emergency bathroom situation, the parent or supervisor should be notified immediately.

Age 3, Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten

- a) For a group of age 3, JK or SK, two adults will escort the children to the washroom.
- b) If just one child must go to the washroom, the adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom and prop the outside door open. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
- c) The volunteer should never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.
- d) If age 3, JK or SK children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only when a second adult is within visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.

Under Six

- a) A child six years of age or younger should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by a screened and trained adult volunteer.
- b) For children six years of age and under, the adult volunteer should escort the

- child to the washroom, and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom.
- c) The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
- d) Children aged 7 and over may go to the washroom with a buddy or peer or alone.
- e) The volunteer should never go into a washroom cubicle with a child or youth and shut the door.

Dealing with a participant's inappropriate behavior:

The best approach to dealing with inappropriate behavior is thoughtful prevention. If a leader has been adequately prepared for teaching or leading, makes clear statements about expectations, and provides an engaging program, inappropriate behavior will be reduced or avoided. If, however, a child, youth or vulnerable adult's behavior is unacceptable, these practices must be followed:

- a) Tell or remind the child, youth or vulnerable adult what is expected.
- b) If it is necessary to speak to a child, youth or vulnerable adult in private, move to a quiet place in view of others. Seek supervisory help if needed and if available.
- c) Keep children, youth or vulnerable adults from harming themselves or others.
- d) If necessary, engage another adult to help you remove the child, youth or vulnerable adult from the situation in order to calm down.
- e) Discipline with children and youth must be limited to talking and time out. Correction to a vulnerable adult must be limited to talking to a vulnerable adult or his or her guardian.
- f) Provide a 'time-out' space for younger children on one side of the room until they are ready to rejoin the group. The 'time-out' should be no longer than one minute for each year of the child's age.
- g) Inform the parent or guardian of the problem and work co-operatively with them. They may have good ideas of how to deal with particular situations.
- h) Do not use corporal punishment (such as hitting, spanking or strapping) under any circumstances.

Transportation:

A leader or volunteer helper who drive children, youth or vulnerable adults must have a valid driver's license, valid insurance, and one seatbelt and/or car seat per person in the vehicle.

All adults responsible for the transportation of children, youth and vulnerable adults should avoid driving them when alone. If transportation with personal cars is considered high risk by St Matthews insurance company, the liability might be transferred by opting for a professional bus service to transport children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Leader and Participant Ratios:

The activity and age of children or youth affects the ratio of children or youth to staff. The management of the program as well as concern for safety, care and social interaction are some of the factors to take into account when establishing adequate ratios. If there are not enough leader and adult volunteers, consider whether the program or activity should be held. (Volunteer helpers who work under the supervision of a screened and trained adult volunteer are welcome additions.)

Ratios of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults to Teachers and Leaders:

While the rule of having two adults at all times in a group is encouraged, there are occasional times when only one leader is present. In such a situation, the leader should know what to do if he or she are alone with a participant. The orientation session held at

the beginning of the year will make clear the provision that must be made for such an occurrence. Where possible, the two adults should be unrelated.

Guidelines for child, youth and vulnerable adult ratios to leaders in a regular program. Additional adults can be helpful if one adult needs to leave the program temporarily.

0 –18 months	2 adults to 6 children
18 months – 2 years	2 adults to 10 children
2 –5 years	2 adults to 12 children
Ages 5 – 14	2 adults to 16 children
Ages 15 – 18	2 adults to 16 children
Vulnerable adults	2 adults to 10 vulnerable adults

Day Excursions and Overnight Outings:

Here are the recommended participants' ratios to teacher, leader and volunteers on day excursions and overnight outings:

Age	Day Excursions	Overnight Excursions / Activities
5 or under	2 adults per group of 10	Overnight excursions not recommended
Ages 6 –8	2 adults per group of 12	Not recommended for age 6; 4 adults for 20 children for ages 7 & 8
Ages 9 –10	2 adults for every 15 children	2 adults for every 10 children
Ages 10 – 14	2 adults for every 15 children	2 adults for every 16 children
Ages 15 – 18	2 adults for every 15 youth	2 adults for every 16 youth
Vulnerable adults	2 adults per 10 vulnerable adults	2 adults per 10 vulnerable adults

Off-Site Activities and Overnight Events:

The following guidelines should be taken with these activities and events and an activity waiver signed:

Day Excursions:

- A leader must assess the risk of the activity and submit that assessment in writing to the committee or other appropriate committee for approval prior to the activity.
- Parents / guardians / caregivers must be notified prior to the outing.
- Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child, youth or vulnerable adult participating in activities / events
- At least one leader should have a cell phone and the phone numbers of where the parents of the children / youth can be contacted during the excursion. The leader should have a copy of the completed consent forms with them.
- All day excursions must be supervised by a minimum of two leaders. Additional support workers might be necessary to accompany vulnerable adults.
- When transportation of children, youth or vulnerable adults is needed for an

activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license, valid automobile insurance and must be screened and trained volunteers or paid staff. The number of persons per vehicle must never exceed the number of seat belts or car seats.

- g) At least one leader should have First Aid training.

Overnight Activities / Events:

Groups should follow all requirements listed in daytime excursions above plus the following:

- a) Each child, youth or vulnerable adult is required to follow pre-established codes of conduct signed by the parent, guardian or caregiver and, the child, youth or vulnerable adults.
- b) If the group is comprised of children, youth or vulnerable adults of both genders, leaders of both genders must be present.
- c) Each leader should have an assigned group of children, youth or vulnerable adults for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.
- d) All facilities in which an overnight function is housed must be equipped with smoke detectors and inside release doors. All members of the group should be made aware of fire exits and fire procedures as required by provincial / regional standards.
- e) No adult should be alone with a single child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- f) If a day or overnight excursion includes trips to a pool, lake, or hot tub, everyone must adhere to all municipal, provincial and federal regulations regarding safety and supervision.

Policy Implementation

Community Groups Using the Organization's Facilities for Regular, Ongoing Programs:

St. Matthews is assumed to be a safe place, even when used by others. Hosting community groups (like Scouts, AA and so on) is part of the outreach and hospitality plan of many Places of Worship. However, as the host, our organization still has responsibilities.

Lessee's Risk Management:

Appropriate representatives must meet with each community group using our facilities to explain the abuse policy. The community group may have their own safety or protection policy. If they cannot produce evidence of a policy to the committee, ask them to take a copy of our protocol to the hierarchy of their organization and ask for implementation of a similar policy.

Lessee's Insurance:

We will ensure that all regular on-going community groups who use our facilities have insurance that includes abuse coverage. Every group will be asked to provide a letter from their insurance broker confirming their coverage. If a group does not have insurance, we will check with our insurance company to see if the community group falls under the organization's insurance. Whenever any organization members are involved in a community group using our facilities, it is important to make sure that the members are covered by the organization's insurance.

"Terms of Use" Contract:

It is prudent to draw up a "terms of use" contract with regular, ongoing groups who use

St. Matthews' premises. This will spell out the responsibilities of each party and we may consider including 'Hold Harmless' agreements to transfer the risks involved.

Occasional Users of St Matthews Facilities:

In addition to on-going regular community groups, other groups may occasionally use our facilities. As host, it is St. Matthews's responsibility to see if these occasional users have their own insurance or are covered by the St. Matthews' insurance policy.

Screening

St. Matthews assesses the responsibility of all leaders and volunteers under their direct supervision who are involved with events involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. Depending on this responsibility assessment, various screening procedures are necessary. Any staff person or volunteer working or volunteering at St. Matthews with power or authority over children, youth or vulnerable adults will be subject to the screening assessment and procedures laid out below.

St. Matthews Employees

All employees will be thoroughly vetted as part of the hiring process. At the employer's expense, a police vulnerable sector check will be completed prior to commencing employment and as required thereafter. A copy of the police vulnerable record check will be kept in the employee's personnel file.

Recruitment of Volunteers

ELCIC says: "To protect vulnerable people and to be protected from liability, the Church must take reasonable action in screening and supervising the volunteers involved in any work with children, youth or other vulnerable people." All prospective volunteers for ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults must meet the following requirements:

- a) Active participation in an ELCIC congregation or ministry for at least six months, or a letter of recommendation from a former pastor.
- b) Attendance at a session to review this policy.
- c) Signing of a volunteer ministry covenant.
- d) Completion of a volunteer application form.
- e) Participation in an interview.
- f) A reference check.
- g) A police vulnerable sector check as required at St. Matthews' expense.

Current Volunteers

Current volunteers will comply with requirements b, c, e, f, and g. St Matthews will host a "Safe Church Policy" meeting for all of our current volunteers. Three things must be accomplished: verify the volunteer's understanding of our Safe Church policy, obtain a reference from someone known to both the volunteer and the church, and document the proceedings. As with new volunteers, a police records check is also required.

Review of the Policy

All prospective volunteers for ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults must attend an introductory session to review this policy. These sessions will be offered by the approved ministry or VPPC for groups or individuals as required. A copy of the Policy to Protect Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable People at St. Matthews will be provided to all prospective volunteers with the expectation that they read the material and become familiar with the contents.

Covenant of Care

At orientation, leaders and volunteer helpers will be asked to sign a "Covenant of Care" document stating that the signatory understands the safety standards as presented in the

orientation, and agrees to adhere to them. A “Covenant of Care” makes the leader’s or volunteer’s behavioral expectations clear at the outset. An explanation of how this code of conduct fits with the St. Matthews commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Volunteer Application

Current volunteers should refer to “Current Volunteers” above. A police vulnerable sector check is required for all adult (age 18 or over) volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults. The cost will be borne by St. Matthews. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be under the supervision of a screened and trained adult volunteer.

All other prospective volunteers including volunteer transfers into ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults must complete a volunteer ministry covenant form and volunteer application form to protect the church from legal liability and for the protection of the volunteer.

The Chair of the VPPC will monitor the status of the application process and will ultimately ensure that a secure record log of Volunteer recruitment is maintained containing:

- a) Volunteer ministry covenant.
- b) Volunteer application form.
- c) Volunteer interview has occurred.
- d) Volunteer references verification.
- e) Volunteer approval.
- f) Police records check report (if required) has been accepted.

Interview

Prospective volunteers will be interviewed by the Pastor and the Chair of the Ministry / Program being applied for. They will review the important items from the volunteer ministry covenant and volunteer application form.

The interviewers can ask follow-up questions and questions of clarification. The information given in the interview is confidential and will be available only to the interviewers and the pastor. The interview will allow the prospective volunteer the opportunity to ask questions about various children, youth and vulnerable adult ministries and the reasons behind our vulnerable persons’ procedures.

Reference Check

Three personal references are requested on the volunteer application form. Acceptable references are:

- a) Former or present pastor
- b) Long-time friend (minimum of 5 years)
- c) One parent (for minors)
- d) Teacher (for minors)
- e) Congregational member (who has sufficient strength of relationship to comment on the individual’s personal habits and character)
- f) Employer or colleague

At least two of these references will be contacted and asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer. A Pastor will complete these contacts and certify acceptability in the secure record log.

Police Vulnerability Sector Check

The right to ask for a police vulnerable sector check for volunteers is reserved by St. Matthews. All salaried staff submits to a *police records check* for their own protection and for the protection of the church. The request form as provided by the Waterloo Regional Police is on file and should be utilized. The police vulnerable sector check will be resubmitted by all staff and volunteers every three years.

A police vulnerable sector check will always be required:

- a) In those instances where someone is a new resident or unknown to the church community
- b) Where an applicant's references cannot be fully verified
- c) For identified programs or ministries working with children, youth or vulnerable adults
- d) Minors (under 18 years of age) are exempt from a police records check if they are supervised by a screened and trained staff or adult volunteer.

The police vulnerability sector check report is to be brought to the Pastor. If there is no criminal record of any sort, the volunteer may be considered for ongoing service in the church. If there is a record or information which raises some concern, the Pastor and the Vice Chair of the VPPC will meet to discuss and resolve the matter.

If the offense is other than child or sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided both the Pastor and VPPC Vice Chair agree.

The following are criteria to consider when evaluating the information:

- a) The number and type of convictions;
- b) The age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offense;
- c) The length of time between past criminal activity and the present;
- d) The conduct and circumstances of the individual since the offense.
- e) The likelihood of the individual repeating the offense.

If any offense is related to the abuse of children or is of a sexual nature, the prospective volunteer will not be approved for ministry with children, youth or vulnerable people at St. Matthews.

The information contained in the police vulnerability sector check report is considered strictly confidential. Only the Pastor can be privy to the information. The Pastor shall store the records check documents in an undisclosed secure location on the church premises. Only the Pastor shall have access to the documents. The submitted police records check report may be returned to the applicant if requested. However, a copy of the records check will be retained to preserve the integrity of our records. The date of acceptance or rejection will be noted in the permanent record log.

Approval

The Pastor will review the materials and complete the secure record log. A prospective volunteer becomes an approved volunteer once the Pastor notarizes the volunteer record log. The Pastor will then notify the respective ministry chair in writing (or e-mail) of approval or disqualification of the volunteer. If for any reason, a volunteer is disqualified they will be informed by the Pastor (VPPC chairperson). Upon completion of the screening process all forms will be retained for an accepted volunteer or returned to the disqualified applicant.

Disqualification

Kinds of criminal convictions which disqualify individuals from working with children and youth:

- a) A criminal conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor shall disqualify an applicant.
- b) Other crimes would strongly suggest that a person should not be considered for work with minors or vulnerable adults at St. Matthews. At the same time, some crimes would not result in automatic disqualification because they would not suggest a risk of abuse or molestation. For example, some property offenses would not be included in this list, particularly if the offense occurred long ago and

the individual has a long history of impeccable behavior.

Incident Reporting Procedures

Anyone who has concerns regarding the safety of a child, youth or vulnerable adult must report it to the Pastor or VPPC Vice Chair who will facilitate the contact with the appropriate child protection agency. The Pastor will complete a general incident report and contact the church's legal advisor as required.

Where a rostered minister is the object of an allegation, the Bishop of the synod in which the minister is rostered will be advised.

Abuse or neglect need not have already occurred for a vulnerable person to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. If in doubt, contact our Pastor.

Discuss Suspicious Behavior Immediately

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between volunteers and a child, youth or other vulnerable adult must be confronted immediately and investigated. Prompt warnings must be issued when appropriate, and the situation closely monitored. The volunteer's services should be terminated immediately for continued violation of sufficient gravity. Sunday school staff, Confirmation Ministry mentors, Youth Group coordinators and other ministry leaders should note when a youth or child appears aloof or withdrawn, or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention.

When an Allegation Occurs

If any volunteer leader has concern for the safety or well-being of any child, youth or other vulnerable person at St. Matthews, he or she should report it immediately to the Pastor, or VPPC Vice Chair who will offer support and assistance in reporting the concern. The VPPC committee may need to discuss/review the next steps to take for a given incident. If necessary the Pastor or VPPC Vice Chair may contact the church's lawyer and will obtain from the concerned person all information necessary to complete the suspected abuse report form.

If the alleged perpetrator is a volunteer at St. Matthews, he or she will be advised of the allegation and suspended from his or her duties. He or she will be advised to seek legal counsel. Pastoral care will be offered to all involved. If the alleged perpetrator is a rostered minister, the incident will be immediately reported to the Bishop of the Synod in which the minister is rostered.

If the alleged perpetrator is a non-rostered employee, the incident will be immediately reported to their immediate supervisor.

Responding to a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult

When a child, youth or other vulnerable adult first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the individual. Give emotional support, reminding the individual that he or she is not at fault. Tell the individual that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the individual that "you will not tell anyone."

Confidentiality

In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised. This means that all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the Pastor, Bishop, or VPPC Vice Chair.

The only claim of confidentiality which overrides the legal duty to report may be that of solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergy and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to

report child abuse or neglect.

Responsibility of the Pastor and the Vice Chair of the VPPC

As soon as possible after an incident is disclosed the Pastor and the Vice Chair of the VPPC will:

- a) In conversation with the person who has made the disclosure; complete the suspected abuse form.
- b) A discussion with the VPPC committee regarding the next steps should be considered.
- c) Advise the person who has made the disclosure to maintain his/her own detailed notes including names, dates, times, places, etc.
- d) Assist the person who has come to you to contact appropriate authorities (Child & Family Services, police or 911 emergency). An in-depth investigation will be left to professionals who are familiar with such cases.
- e) Take the allegations seriously without prejudging the situation and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support help to reduce further hurt and extending whatever pastoral resources are appropriate. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- f) Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is an approved volunteer, that person should be suspended from his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her responsibilities until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Protection from Liability

Church personnel are required to immediately report to the appropriate local authorities any suspected case of child abuse. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No one is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. Church leaders are accountable to God to protect God's children. Although protecting parents as much as possible from undue interference by outside authorities may be desirable, the protection of children from abuse is more important.

St Matthews understands that a victim or his or her representative may consider that St Matthews has to some extent, a liability relating to an incident. St Matthews public statements may be constrained if the situation so warrants.

As part of a child protection investigation, social workers are required under the Child and Family Services Act to assess:

- a) The child's current state of health.
- b) Their sense of safety and their views of abuse, previous abuse, neglect or harm.
- c) The ability of the parent(s) to care for and protect the child.

The social worker assigned by Family Services will talk to the people who have contact with the victim and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to ask for whatever information is needed to complete an investigation. If denied access to a record, they can seek a court order.

Who Must Report

All persons who have "reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection" have an obligation to report.

Report Follow Up

A general incident report form will be completed by the VPPC Chair following a report of

suspected abuse. The completed general incident report and all subsequent correspondence will be kept in a confidential file in a locked metal file cabinet.

Reporting to the Insurance Carrier

Any allegation of abuse, no matter how minor, should be reported immediately via the Vulnerable Person Protection Committee to your organization's insurance company.

Response to Allegations of Abuse

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is completely effective. An accusation of abuse may occur in any church. The St Matthews Policy to Protect Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults contains an approved strategy to respond to allegations of abuse.

St. Matthews' response strategy recognizes the following underlying principles:

- a) All allegations are to be taken seriously.
- b) Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- c) Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities with the guidance of the church lawyer as determined by the VPPC committee.
- d) Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.
- e) The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

Spokesperson

The Pastor or the Vice Chair of the VPPC will serve as the spokesperson for the congregation, ministry or office. He or she will speak to the media and the congregation, ministry or office regarding the matter in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. Communicating publicly may have legal implications and therefore may be limited to events already in the public domain. Divulging details of an accusation in any public interview will not be tolerated. The Church will endeavor to have its lawyer present while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies. The accused will be advised to seek legal counsel and will be offered pastoral care.

Public Position of St. Matthews

In the case of an allegation of abuse, the following points would be made until all of the facts are uncovered and the case reviewed:

- a) It is always tragic when individuals are abused or exploited.
- b) St. Matthews' is aware of the toll which any form of abuse takes.
- c) Careful precautions have been taken to protect the children entrusted to our Church's care.
- d) Accusations of abuse are distressing to the Church.
- e) St. Matthews will do all in its power to address any needs in this situation.
- f) For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to the appropriate authorities.

Conduct and Counsel

St. Matthews will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.

- a) It will not be denied that the incident occurred; all allegations are taken seriously.
- b) The nature of the incident will not be minimized by saying such things as "It only happened once," or "It wasn't that serious."
- c) The victim or the victim's family will not be blamed.
- d) The church will not be accusatory.

Appendix A: Evaluation of Risk Factors

Risk Category	Risk Factor	Yes	No
Degree of Isolation	The leader / volunteer helper may be alone with person being served.		
Degree of Supervision	The leader / volunteer helper has limited or no supervision in role		
	The activities of leader / volunteer helper are in a place where activities are not observed or monitored		
Access of Property	The leader / volunteer helper has access to personal property or money of persons served.		
	The leader / volunteer helper has access to confidential information related to the person served		
Degree of Physical Contact	The position description includes touching persons served.		
Vulnerability of Persons Served	Persons served have language or literacy barriers.		
	Persons served are immobile.		
	Persons served have challenges that contribute to their vulnerability (e.g. physical, psychological, and situational).		
Degree of Physical Demands	The activity involves potential danger to person served (e.g. rock climbing, using a stove).		
	Activity involves potential stress (e.g. children upset by visit to nursing homes, support group activities).		
Degree of Trust	The leader / volunteer helper develops close, personal relationships with persons served.		
	The position involves transportation of persons served.		
	The leader / volunteer helper contributes to making career or other important decisions of persons served.		
Degree of Inherent Risk	The activity heightens potential for the leader / volunteer helper to be in contact with bodily fluids or disease of the person served.		
	The activity exposes the person served to operation of or handling of potentially dangerous equipment (e.g. lawnmower).		
	The activity exposes the person served to handling toxic substances or results in exposure to poor air quality, noise, etc. (e.g. demolition work in an inner-city mission).		

Appendix B: Sample Form for Logging

Sample of Log: (one page per volunteer)

Name of Volunteer Ministry:

Application Date

Interviewed Date

Covenant Date

Participants

References:

First Name

Date

Accepted yes/no

Initials

Second Name

Date

Accepted yes/no

Initials

Police Check Date

Accepted

signature

Date

Approved/Disqualified

Accepted

signature

Date

Comments:

Updated Police Check

Accepted

signature

Date

Appendix C: Ontario Ministry of Children & Youth Services

There are legal requirements to report cases where abuse and neglect may have happened. St Matthews "Safe Church Policy" is not intended to replace or supersede the Ontario Government's legal requirements.

The link shown here is to a Government of Ontario website that has more information regarding child abuse and neglect. "The Child and Family Services Act" is the governing instrument with which we must comply:

www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaidthereportingabuse/abuseandneglect.aspx

Updated:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Alternatively, perform an internet search for "Reporting Child Abuse Ontario Government"

Appendix D: Local Children's Aid Society Contact Info

Family and Children's Aid Society
200 Ardelt Avenue,
Kitchener, Ontario
N2C 2L9
T: (519) 576-0540
F: (519) 576-4709
Web: www.facswaterloo.org